

Thursday, September 4, 2008

Sept. 8-12 is 'AskAway Awareness Week'

Wisconsin celebrates virtual reference service

MADISON—Wisconsin students and residents of all ages can cut through the clutter of information around them and get reliable answers using AskAway, Wisconsin's statewide online reference service.

AskAway connects Wisconsin patrons to a statewide and national network of trained, experienced librarians available around the clock, seven days a week. Wisconsin is celebrating the success of this vital service just as school begins with "AskAway Awareness Week," Sept. 8-12.

"The AskAway librarians extend the reach of our school library media center specialists," said State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster. "During the school year and in the after-school hours, students from middle school through college seek homework and research help through this statewide reference service."

AskAway expands the long-time role of libraries as primary sources for general information in their communities and centers for research and study within schools. Patrons using AskAway are linked to research professionals who can help them find and use authoritative sources in their school or local public library, a regional library, or in the BadgerLink collection of databases. Some of the most common requests from students are for help developing science fair projects, researching historical figures, or gathering information for essays and extended projects in literature and the social sciences.

(more)

“AskAway is available at any time,” Burmaster noted. “The service helps students learn to assess, choose, and use online sources, all valuable information literacy skills that will help them compete effectively in the information economy of the 21st century.”

Beginning this fall the AskAway service is extending its reach into the public school community with a trial program. Students at Tremper High School in Kenosha, South Division High School in Milwaukee, Homestead High School in Mequon, Mosinee High School, and New Holstein High School will have direct links on their school library websites. These direct links will provide easier access to the AskAway research professionals even when their school library is closed.

The statewide availability of AskAway is made possible by a federal Library Services and Technology Act grant administered by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Similar to BadgerLink, the state’s online library, AskAway is an online service that opens the vast resources of Wisconsin’s libraries to all residents, no matter where or when they need information.

Burmaster encourages citizens to join the celebration of AskAway Awareness Week, Sept. 8-12. “Visit the AskAway site and learn more about this valuable learning tool,” she said.

Students and residents of all ages can link to AskAway from http://dpi.wi.gov/rl/qp_form.html or from their local public library’s website. For additional information, please contact Martha Berninger at martha.berninger@dpi.wi.gov.

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